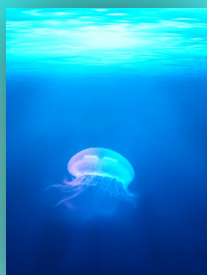




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# Undersea



365 49 34

## Chapter 1 by seanarturo

It was 7am, and Quinn Nguyen's alarm just woke him up. He was supposed to be studying for the biggest test of his life, but he spent the night watching Netflix and using his book as a pillow. This was bad.

Quinn couldn't care less to be honest, but he knew his dad would take it all the wrong way. He expected Quinn to ace the test and begin his journey to become a Prime 4 Medic like him, but Quinn wasn't sure it was going to happen now.

Actually, he was pretty sure it wasn't going to happen, and that meant he had to pick a different test he could actually hope to pass before 9am came around or accept a failure and end up as an Omega Finite Menial Laborer. That would basically turn him into a janitor who kept Undersea free from clutter, and he didn't want that no matter how important it was to the future of humanity.

He didn't care about the future in all honesty. He didn't really care about much. The way he saw it, humans used to live on the surface hundreds of years ago, but they mucked up the land and air with their nuclear wars, so they adapted to life in the sea. All the old people who grew up

listening to their grandparents tell them stories about what it was like before "the dive" just sounded like idiotic dreamers to Quinn. He didn't want to go back to the surface when life was alright where they were. He didn't want to go back to the water, anyway.

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But all that thinking didn't matter right now. He had to figure out which of the six VAMPEC Tests he was going to take. His options were the Medic Test which would let him research human biology like his dad or see patients that were injured or sick, the Engineer Test which would let him either work on expanding and maintaining the huge underwater city or developing new tools and structural components that would make those things easier, the Command Test which would put him in place to make and revise laws or become one of the Seven who lead all humanity, the Pioneer Exam which would let him go out into the deep seas and explore the regions as well as hunt the fish they used for food and materials, the Virtuoso Test which would let him become an artist or entertainer for the undersea or even a personal... masseuse if he wanted, or the Advisor Test which would let him become a teacher for the students or consultant for any of the other Situations.

It wasn't a hard decision for most people, but Quinn just couldn't bring himself to feel passionate about any of them in particular. He just knew he didn't want to spend the rest of his life cleaning up after everyone else.

## Chapter 2 by intellikat



Quinn flipped through the VAMPEC pamphlet and blew through his lips. Before he could continue weighing his test options, his i-comm quivered and he whisked the display surface to see the beaming face of his classmate Paula Nander. Paula was stunning in every regard-- smart, beautiful, charming, witty. She and Quinn had been friends since early childhood and she was the main reason why he had progressed this far with such poor study habits without being fingered earlier for a fast-track to Omega status before age 18.

"Hey Quinn."

"Hey Paula."

"You... awake?"

"Basic functions... are... functioning. yes."

"You didn't study last night did you?" See more of Story Wars

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"I can see the fear in your eyes."

"That's not fear, Paula. That's innovation."

"Innovation?"

"That's right. I found a better way to study last night. I'm going to write an e-book and make millions. Won't need a job then."

"What's the technique?"

Quinn sipped. "Osmosis. Capillary action of information through soft tissue."

"You fell asleep on your textbook."

"Intentionally."

Another face popped into view on the display.

"Quinn."

"Derek."

"Is that... innovation I see on your face?"

Quinn laughed. "That's right. How would you like to know the secret of passing today's Command Test?"

"Mate, if you're the one who knows the secret, I'll go ahead and volunteer Omega myself. I don't want you leading humanity like a hairball down the final drain."

"I'd be a great addition to the Seven. I've got perfect hair."

"Alright, alright. Cut the chatter you lovers." Paula kissed Derek affectionately on the cheek.

"We'll see you in twenty, yeah, Quinn?"

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Quinn saluted reluctantly, then he looked at the hair he felt so good about. He was the best-looking janitor in sector six.

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Quinn sighed and pulled himself to seating, then standing. He went to the closet and jerked on his student overalls. There was no turning back now.

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The Starbucks was humming with energy as Quinn ordered his second coffee of the day.

Paula and Derek pushed through the glass door, dressed as almost everyone at the VAMPEC location was. They were all about to embark on the same 4-hour exam, and were all preparing in the same way. Caffeine.

The couple ordered their drinks and Derek asked the question Quinn knew he would.

"Ummm.... still undecided."

"What the hell, Quinn?" Derek laughed. "The exam begins in thirty minutes. If you haven't decided by now--"

"--Hey, hey. When you know you can get any girl you want, it's always harder to choose, right?"

Paula shook her head. "Virtuoso is a very impressive word, but I think it's the one you should pick."

Quinn looked serious for a moment. "Yeah. Yeah. I know."

Derek checked his i-comm as he scooped up their drinks.

"Hey, we're heading for the exam rooms early. I want to get out of this crowd and settle myself."

"Okay, okay. Let's go."

The three pushed out through the entry and headed for the large VAMPEC hall that led to the examination centre. It was pure white and brilliantly lit, except in the few sections where the sea

could be seen beyond the clear panelling. As the trio neared the centre, a Proctor General stepped into their path holding a

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"Sorry students, I need to

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The three reached for their student cards.

"What is this about?" queried Derek. "The threats from ALTAN?"

"Nothing to be concerned about. Routine checks, that's all." The Proctor General began to leaf through their IDs.

"I heard there was another this morning. Is that true?"

"No, not at all. Don't let this concern you in your tests today. It's really just routine."

The Proctor General turned to Quinn, who was still fumbling in his pockets.

"Young man?"

Quinn looked sheepishly at his friends.

"You forgot your ID? Again??"

The Proctor General frowned.

"I can't permit you entry without it."

"I know, I know." Quinn began to jog backward. I'll be quick. I'll grab a raillift. I'll be right there!"

"You'll never make it in time, Quinn," said Paula, shaking her head. "You'll have to apply for misadventure."

"I'll make it! You'll see!"

Quinn broke into a sprint down the massive hall and past the throng of bodies beginning to fill it. He turned a corner and headed for the railline that had brought him here earlier. He was lucky indeed, catching the first lift, but when he arrived home and finally found his ID under a box of Chinese takeaway, more than half his time was expired. He sank down on a kitchen chair, knowing that Paula had been right. He would not make this exam cycle.

Suddenly, he felt a barely perceptible rumbling. The lights on the ceiling flickered for a few seconds, and a strange, low hum was heard. Quinn knew something serious had happened.

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When the monitor registered the live images from the VAMPEC exam centre, Quinn stood transfixed, now unaware of anything but what he was seeing.

A terrorist attack had decimated the entire centre.

### Chapter 3 by LethalPianist



Quinn told himself to wake up. He pinched himself. He smashed his fist into the wall. He didn't wake up. His arm still hurts where he pinched himself, and his fist feels like it has been broken.

It wasn't a dream.

Oh no.

Derek and Paula!

Quinn immediately leapt to his feet and rushed back to the rail line. It was shut down due to the terrorist attack. He started running towards the examination center. Tears burned down his face like hot acid.

"No-no-no-no-no" He muttered under his breath. His friends couldn't have died in that. It couldn't have been real. He remembered that time he and Derek laughing so hard at Paula's bad haircut that milk snorted up their noses. He remembered that other time when they all failed the Specially Gifted "Geek" test at the beginning of the year. He remembered every single day, when after school, they would head towards the Starbucks and hang out. He remembered so many things, so many memories. They couldn't be dead, they couldn't be.

Fifteen minutes later, Quinn arrived at the examination hall.

It was in smithereens. Medics were everywhere, along with the security forces, whom were taken from the lower ranks of those who passed the Command Test. Quinn rushed over to the temporary medical encampment.

"M-My friends!" Quinn shouted, "were there any survivors?"

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Quinn ignored the man. "My friends, Derek and Paula, Derek has red hair, a-and he's kind of short... Paula had chestnut hair, and s-she...she wore glasses. T-they were b-both here for t-the examination..." Quinn started tearing up at remembering his friends, thinking they might be dead.

"I'm sorry son, but everyone is over there." The man pointed towards the back of the encampment. "However, I think it's better if you just have some time to yourself..."

"N-n-no. T-thank you." Quinn calmed himself. He went to the back, where the man pointed. There he saw bodies laid out in a line. Rows and rows and rows of them. The casualties were staggering.

And near the front was two faces he recognize very well...

Paula looked relatively fine. However, it seems her head had bled out and scabbed over her chestnut hair. Her eyes look up at the sky, glazed over, lifeless.

Derek looked much worse. He was missing half of his body, with blood still spreading from his fresh wounds, his intestines spilling out from his stomach...

Quinn vomited.

And then screamed.

## Chapter 4 by Phantim



How could this have happened? There was security; Quinn had seen it... survived because of it. But not of that mattered to him. He looked back to his friends, Paula... he had had feelings for her but had never said anything. He had decided he wanted to apply to Command, so they could be together, and if he passed the test he was going to let her know how he felt. Now he was never going to see that smile again. Never going experience the things he had dreamed about with her. Then there was Derek... his best friend, the boy who had made him laugh and had brought so much joy to this underwater prison.

Tears continued to roll down his face as grief washed over him. No one came up and said anything to him for a while, they were all busy grieving themselves. Eventually a hand rested on his shoulder.

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"Quinn Nguyen?" A voice

"Yes, that's me." He said through a tight throat, choking back his grief.

"You need to come with us for questioning." The voice said.

What? Quinn thought. He turned and looked at the man who had been speaking, it was Admiral Traylock, Head of Command's Security division.

"Questioning for what?" Quinn asked.

"It is better if we do not discuss it here. But I have reports that you were seen fleeing the test center just moments before the explosion. Care to explain that?" the Admiral asked.

Quinn was shocked. They think I did this? No it was too much. This can't be real. He couldn't believe what he was hearing, he couldn't formulate a response in his head.

"No answer? Very well. Take him away men." He said.

Suddenly Quinn felt two sets of firm hands grab on to his shoulders and lift him up out of his tears and vomit, then they began escorting him down the hall, following the Admiral.

## Chapter 5 by Phantim



Meanwhile miles away life went on as usual for Hakira. Just another day on Alta 4. The Alta stations were floating cities. When Europe and the Americas decided to hide from the radiated land underwater, Japan decided to use floating cities instead. Since then survivors from many other nations around the world had come to live aboard the ship cities and flee the nuclear wastelands that the continents had become. Altans the survivors had named themselves.

Hakira had just gotten done working her 10 hour shift at the fish docks. Providing food for thousands of people without the use of large farms was a heavy burden. She was feeling the weight of her work now that she was finally able to relax. She was sitting at on a park bench outside her daughter's school enjoying the sunshine and waiting for her four year old daughter to finish class and emerge. Everything was going like usual. Until the torpedoes hit. The whole

ship shook. Chaps and smoke were everywhere as the siren began to wail. After a moment of panic she ran into her daughter's classroom. The siren was still going. The siren was still going.

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have sustained heavy damage from Atlantian Subs! They believe we are responsible for an attack against their base. God help us, they have declared war! For your sakes please get the escape vehicles... Alta 4... is doomed." He concluded before the sirens resumed. ELTER! WARNING SEEK SHELTER!

Tears flooded Hakiras eyes as she heard the broadcast. Her home, her life was here! There was nowhere left to go... they had fled their homes already because of war... would humans never change? She had to control her tears and focus on finding her daughter. Even now the halls were filled with screaming children running for the escape pods and airlifts.

"HATSUNE! HATSUNE!" she cried out as she waded through the crowds.

Her world was crumbling around her, literally. It was like hell. She felt something like an earthquake as the ship began to sink. Some of the children just held hands and started singing. Thinking there was no longer enough time to make it to any of the escapes.

## Chapter 6 by intellikat



**\*Quinn's people come into contact with other people for the first time since "the dive," and they come bearing gifts...\***

Hakira felt something dark and impenetrable swell and fall upon her-- a hideous fear unlike anything she had ever experienced or sensed possible. The cold of the Pacific seawater and the sudden shudder of everything physical and emotional collapsing beneath her and being swallowed by the mighty and insatiable maw of the deepest ocean took her without remorse. Before she could take a breath herself, she was beneath the waves-- the rubble, the other bodies clawing and screaming like rats at anything as they were pressed down beneath the mighty destructive forces by emotionless Death, who would most certainly take them all to their watery graves this day.

"Doom is dark, and deeper than any sea-dingle."

This strange line-- poetry amidst horror, somehow filled Hakira's mind. Some bit of poetry half-remembered grasped her almost like a parent from above, the waves holding her in rescue. And in that moment, her mind flitted. She would not experience the most hideous sensations of drowning.

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"Who's in there?"

Quinn was banging on his side of the two-way mirror from within the room to which the Security team had escorted him over an hour before. Sometime after bringing him in, there was a flurry of activity, and the team had exited without any explanation. The room being soundproof, Quinn was growing a bit concerned. If there were another terrorist attack, would anyone remember him? He decided he would have to start thinking of himself, and began searching the room for something that might aid him.

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On the viewscreen in the Command Bridge, concerns for the new prisoner certainly had vanished from Admiral Traylock's mind. Growing larger and larger every passing moment were what looked to be tiny metal capsules powered by tiny propellers. Their dull lights were searching in the direction of Undersea.

"Sir. Torpedos are ready."

"No. Hold." The Admiral lifted himself up to height. "Those are escape vehicles. They're not attacking. They're seeking refuge."

Nonetheless, at the sea-dock hangar, a platoon of well-armed security personnel pressed themselves against the bulkhead. In only a few moments they would welcome these refugees, or whomever they were, into Undersea.

As the wheelock turned, hands gripped submachine guns tightly and eyes narrowed. But what greeted all at the entryptoint that day was not to be expected.

A haggard mother stepped across the threshold, dripping wet. In her arms was the lifeless body of a tiny child.

**Chapter 7 by Phantim**



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You dream about going up there  
But that is a big mistake  
Just look at the world around you  
Right here on the ocean floor  
Such wonderful things surround you  
What more is you lookin' for?

Under the sea  
Under the sea  
Darling it's better  
Down where it's wetter  
Take it from me  
Up on the shore they work all day  
Out in the sun they slave away  
While we devotin'  
Full time to floatin'  
Under the sea

Down here all the fish is happy  
As off through the waves they roll  
The fish on the land ain't happy  
They sad 'cause they in their bowl  
But fish in the bowl is lucky  
They in for a worser fate  
One day when the boss get hungry  
Guess who's gon' be on the plate

Under the sea  
Under the sea  
Nobody beat us

Fry us and eat us

In fricassee

We what the land folks loves to cook

Under the sea we off the hook

We got no troubles

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Life is the bubbles  
Under the sea  
Under the sea  
Since life is sweet here  
We got the beat here  
Naturally  
Even the sturgeon an' the ray  
They get the urge 'n' start to play  
We got the spirit  
You got to hear it  
Under the sea

The newt play the flute  
The carp play the harp  
The plaice play the bass  
And they soundin' sharp  
The bass play the brass  
The chub play the tub  
The fluke is the duke of soul  
(Yeah)  
The ray he can play  
The lings on the strings  
The trout rockin' out  
The blackfish she sings  
The smelt and the sprat  
They know where it's at  
An' oh that blowfish blow

Under the sea  
Under the sea

When the sardine

Begin the beguine

It's music to me

What do they go? A lot of

We got a hot crustacean band

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Each little clam here  
know how to jam here  
Under the sea  
Each little slug here  
Cuttin' a rug here  
Under the sea  
Each little snail here  
Know how to wail here  
That's why it's hotter  
Under the water  
Ya we in luck here  
Down in the muck here  
Under the sea"

### Chapter 8 by Phantim



The refugees' hearts were not warmed however. These people were the ones who had destroyed their home and killed many they loved, cared about, or knew. Hakira stood there holding the lifeless body of her daughter, tears streamed down her face as she thought about the bitter irony of all this. Her tears dripped down on the ground and joined the pool of salt water that had already been running down her cold and soaking body... she thought back to an old proverb she had heard "The Oceans are made from the tears of angels, weeping over how evil mankind had become."

As the guard came over to search her, Hakira devised a plan. She was too grief stricken to go on living. They murdered her daughter, she wanted to the same fate. As the guard came nearer, she set Hatsune's tiny body on the ground. Then she pulled out her fish cleaning knife and stabbed the guard in the neck. That is when the other guards opened fire. As the other survivors from Alta 4 began to scream and panic, the guns were soon turned on them as well. Muzzle flashes, blood, screaming... the airlock was filled with these things. Then suddenly everything was quiet. No one was left from Alta 4, the genocide was complete.

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Quinn had been happy when the disease took him, he was happy he was going to see Paula again.

No one ever did find out who really blew up the VAMPEC test center or why. Then again, there was nobody left to care.

In the end it is just another mystery... just another tragedy... buried deep undersea.

the end

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